

Message Text

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TAGS: OVIP (KISSINGER)

SUBJECT: PRESS MATERIAL

1. HERewith WASHPOST MARCH 1 LOCAL BYLINER BY MICHAEL GETLER, HEADED US TROOPS MAY QUIT KOREA.
2. DEFENSE SECRETARY JAMES R. SCHLESINGER YESTERDAY RAISED THE POSSIBILITY THAT U.S. ARMY TROOPS MAY GRADUALLY BE WITHDRAWN FROM KOREA WITH THEIR ROLE IN ASIA REPLACED BY A "MOBILE RESERVE" FORCE OF U.S. MARINE AND ARMY PERSONNEL BASED ON GUAM AND HAWAII.
3. OTHER PENTAGON OFFICIALS INDICATED THAT THESE FORCES COULD THEN BE IN A POSITION TO MOVE QUICKLY BACK TO THE ASIAN MAINLAND IF NECESSARY.
4. SCHLESINGER APPEARING BEFORE THE HOUSE APPROPRIATIONS DEFENSE SUBCOMMITTEE, WAS QUESTIONED BY REP. ROBERT N. GIAMO (D-CONN.) ON WHY THE UNITED STATES CONTINUES TO MAIN-

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TAIN ABOUT 40,000 TROOPS IN SOUTH KOREA MORE THAN 20 YEARS

AFTER THE WAR ENDED THERE AND IN LIGHT OF IMPROVED RELATIONS WITH CHINA.

5. SCHLESINGER CONCEDED THAT "AT THE PRESENT TIME A MAJOR REASON LIES UNDER THE HEADING OF POLITICAL RATHER THAN MILITARY CONSIDERATION." HE SUGGESTED, AS HAVE OTHER OFFICIALS, THAT THE CHINESE NO LONGER ARE ANXIOUS TO SEE U.S. TROOPS LEAVE ASIA, AT LEAST PRECIPITOUSLY, BECAUSE OF SOVIET POWER IN THE AREA.

6. THE EFFECT OF "A SHARP OR SUDDEN WITHDRAWAL OF AMERICAN FORCES ON THE POLITICAL STABILITY OF THAT AREA," HE TOLD GIAMO, "WOULD HAVE A DISTRESSING EFFECT IN SOUTH KOREA, JAPAN AND CHINA." BUT SCHLESINGER ASSURED THE CONGRESSMAN THAT THE REASONS FOR MAINTAINING U.S. GROUND FORCES IN NORTHEAST ASIA ARE "UNDERGOING RENEWED SCRUPINITY."

7. AND, HE SAID, "WE ARE LOOKING AT CONVERSION OF ARMY UNITS IN KOREA INTO A MOBILE RESERVE RATHER THAN ONE THAT IS STATIONED PERMANENTLY AND FIRMLY" IN THAT COUNTRY. SUCH CONVERSION HE SAID, BEARS ON "THE QUESTION OF THE MARINE DIVISION THAT IS STATIONED ON GUAM."

8. SCHLESINGER SAID CONGRESS "WILL SEE DURING THE COURSE OF THE NEXT NINE MONTHS FURTHER WITHDRAWALS FROM THE WESTERN PACIFIC," THOUGH HE DID NOT SPECIFY WHETHER ANY OF THAT WOULD BE FROM SOUTH KOREA. IN GENERAL, THE DEFENSE SECRETARY INDICATED HE STILL FAVORED A GRADUAL PACE TO WHATEVER THE UNITED STATES DOES WITH RESPECT TO SOME CUT-BACKS IN THE ALMOST 200,000 U.S. TROOPS--INCLUDING THOSE WITH THE 7TH FLEET-BASED IN ASIA. SOME OF THE FORTHCOMING REDUCTIONS ARE CERTAIN TO BE IN AIR UNITS BASED IN THAILAND.

9. SCHLESINGER GAVE NO FURTHER DETAILS LEAVING OPEN THE QUESTION ABOUT WHETHER SUCH A MOBILE RESERVE--IF FORMALLY APPROVED--WOULD REMAIN BASED IN GUAM OR WOULD OCCASIONALLY DEPLOY TO SOUTH KOREA. (END TEXT) CASEY

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